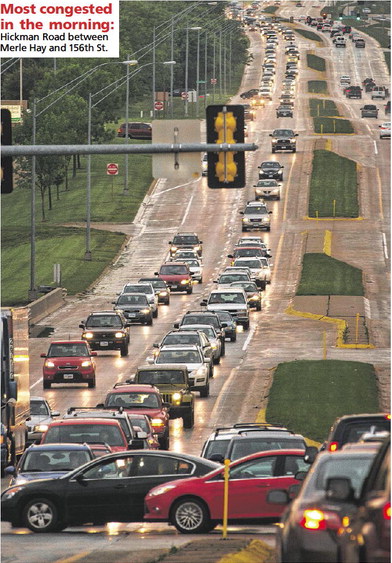
**A comfortable COMMUTE   
  
Iowa has one of the shortest commutes in the nation, but we have our share of congestion, too.**

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Iowans may be bristling about high costs for gasoline, but they are bragging about their quick trips to work.  
  
With an average of 19.1 min­utes, Iowa is tied with Kansas for the seventh-fastest com­mutein the nation, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. North Da­kota has the shortest at 16.1 minutes, while the national av­erage is 25 minutes.  
  
More than three-quarters of Iowans drive alone to their jobs, and a growing num­ber are travel­ing from rural communities for employ­ment in the state's metropolitan areas. Whilesomemayhave different strategies for commuting, there's no doubt Iowans experi­ence far fewer traffic head­aches than most motorists else­where in the United States.  
  
Will Cowan, who lives in Waukee and works in down­town Des Moines at Principal Financial Group, just smiles when he talks about commut­ing in the Des Moines area.  
  
Compared to other cities that I have lived, it's no trouble at all. It's a breeze. Houston, Detroit, Chicago and Los Ange­les can be an hour to two hours. It's nothing here," Cowan said. The average Polk County commute is 18.6 minutes, while residents of booming Dallas County — one of the nation's fastest-growing counties — spend 20.8 minutes traveling to and from work.  
  
Laurie Soroka, who lives near the Des Moines Art Cen­ter on the city's west side, said she has a five-minute drive to her residential sales job at Cen­turyLink downtown. It's such ashort trip she said she quit taking the bus because she wasn't saving that much money, even when gasoline was nearly $4 a gallon. She parks for free on a city street a few blocks away.  
  
Five minutes, serious­ly. That's awesome," Soro­ka said.  
  
Glenn Lyons, president and chief executive officer of the Downtown Des Moines Community Alli­ance, uses the short com­muting time here as a sell­ing point.  
  
We always have to re­member that time is mon­ey, and we have a deal in Des Moines. If you are in Minneapolis or Kansas City, your commute would be much more than the norm," Lyons said. Iowans travel an aver­age of 11.5 miles to work. About 79 percent make the trip alone, reflecting a three-decade-long trend, according to the Iowa De­partment of Transporta­tion. Another 10 percent use carpools, 1percent take public transportation and slightly less than 4 percent walk. About 1 percent ride a bicycle or motorcycle, or use a taxi or other means. The rest work at home.  
  
In addition, more Iowans are commuting to jobs in other counties, which often adds to travel times, according to DOT planners. In 2010, more than half the residents of 11 counties traveled to jobs elsewhere, as compared to only two such counties in 1990. Madison County resi­dents, many of whom work in the Des Moines area, have Iowa's longest com­muting time, averaging 29 minutes. Harrison County in western Iowa, home to many workers in Omaha-Council Bluffs, ranks sec­ond at 27.2 minutes. Iowa's shortest commute is in northwest Iowa's Sioux County, where the average trip is 12.3 minutes. With jobs moving more and more to metropolitan areas in Iowa, commuting has taken on more of a role to support the labor force to these metro areas," ac­cording to a draft report of Iowa in Motion," a DOT strategic planning docu­ment. The influence of a metropolitan area is no longer just the major core city, but also includes the surrounding counties, the study said. Nicholas Cicero, an ex­ecutive officer with the State Public Defenders Of­fice at the Iowa Capitol complex, commutes daily fromhishomeinWaukee in Dallas County to Des Moines. He said one of the reasons he moved here from New York was that he didn't want to deal with the traffic congestion. In fact, he took a train to work in New York instead of driv­ing.  
  
But Cicero said he's con­cerned that traffic conges­tion in the Des Moines area has worsened since he moved here about five years ago. He usually com­mutes to work on Inter­state Highway 235, the state's busiest road with more than 110,000 vehicles daily in some sections, and he complains that at times it's like a big standstill." In that situation, he often switches to Grand Avenue as an alternate route to the Capitol.  
  
 **See DRIVE, Page** [**8A**](javascript:parent.contents.gotoPage(%22A%22,%22A8%22);) **Most congested in the morning:**   
  
Hickman Road between Merle Hay and 156th St.

  
**Traffic flows Thursday morning looking west along Hickman Road from 128th Street to 142nd Street in Clive.** RODNEY WHITE/THE REGISTER

